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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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REP. ROBERSON FILES PUBLIC SAFETY BILL SETTING PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS, TRAINING FOR 911 DISPATCHERS

Tallahassee, FL- State Representative Ken Roberson (R-Port Charlotte) has filed House Bill (HB) 355, known as the 911 Bill, a public safety bill that requires 911 call takers and dispatchers to take a Public Safety Telecommunications Training Program, pass an examination administered by the Department of Health (DOH) which measures the competency and proficiency in public safety telecommunications, and re-defines 911 emergency dispatchers as “911 Public Safety Telecommunicators”. Representative Roberson released the following statement:

“Although the majority of Florida’s 911 calls are handled correctly, an investigation of Florida’s 911 dispatch systems has revealed that every year, Florida 911 workers make hundreds of critical errors that endanger lives and leave people waiting for help. This situation is particularly distressing given that Florida’s 911 call centers have no uniform statewide standards for training. In the most egregious cases, dispatchers have been allowed to start processing calls just two days after being hired. This situation is unacceptable and must be rectified. To that end, this bill addresses the shortcomings of the current system thus ensuring that Floridians’ call for help in an emergency will receive professional, timely and critical assistance when they most need it.”

The 2008 abduction and murder of 21 year-old Denise Amber Lee of North Port, Florida is a horrific example of the need for 911 reform in Florida. An opportunity to save her life was lost due, in part, to a botched 911 call. This tragedy has brought the need to improve Florida’s 911 system to the attention of the public. Unlike 32 other states, Florida does not mandate training or certification of 911 call takers or dispatchers. Under HB 355, these public safety workers will be required to take renewal training (continuing education) courses for recertification every two years, and standards for discipline are set. The bill also authorizes funding from the State E911 Trust Fund which is funded by the 50 cents per month Floridians pay on their phone bill to support 911.

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**Committees: Governmental Affairs Policy Committee (VC); Health Care Appropriations Committee;
Elder & Family Services Policy Committee**